



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Commission on Children



Art by Angelica Pecci, Grade 3

One Year Later

The youngest generation will have September 11 as a major backdrop for their growing years. How they incorporate the information from this event and the events that have followed will contribute to their values and worldview just as World War II and the Cold War influenced their parents and grandparents.

In a recent poll take by Public Broadcasting, 50% of more than two thousand five hundred children said they think about September 11 once a week or more and 19% said they think about it every day.

Through conversations, interviews and forums in which Connecticut's young people voiced their concerns following September 11, certain key themes emerged.

Security and Safety

Children and youth want to know that their schools and communities are safe. They want to know how to exit a building if there is a danger. They are concerned for children who are disabled that a safety plan is in place

"Life as we know it has changed. Directly or indirectly, we all felt pain and devastation. Everyone's house burned down that day. We came together as a country as never before."

Louisa Fisher,
a young woman whose
father died in the
World Trade Center

for everyone's safety.

Everyday Heroes

Children and youth seek specific ways to participate in neighborhood, school and town that give purpose and pride to community.

They want to help and feel largely underutilized in the aftermath of September 11.

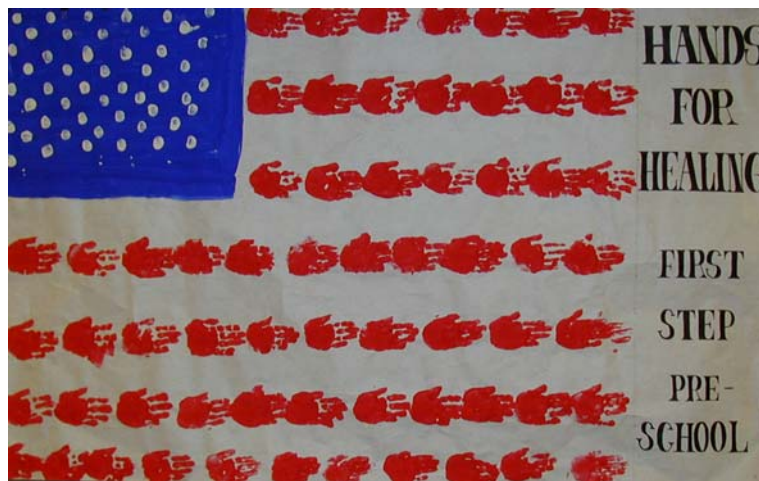
They want to meet and to sometimes be, everyday heroes. With the bold return of the hero on the block who protects against danger, puts out the fire, watches and cares for community in spite of cost or hours, children and youth want to learn from heroes. They seek these values.

They want to be active contributors to democracy. Youth wants to be given ways to lead.

Diversity

Youth understands that September 11 was partially about hatred for difference and a vengeful power that accompanied the hatred.

They want to meet people who are different from them and to learn how to fully embrace diversity. Perhaps even more than the adults around them, the next generation seems ready to tackle bias concerning religion, political practice and race as a core contribution to society.



Safety Within, Safety Without

Children want to feel in control. They are interested in what they can do to make their environments safe and caring. Though adults should always be in charge of children's safety and protection, youth want to feel they can contribute in modest ways and wish to master

"The people jumping out of buildings really took the wind out of me. I felt that the world had suddenly changed between math and history class. I am more aware of how the world perceives America, and the fact that we need to cherish life."

Frank Chi, 17

"Should I learn about bombs? Should soccer games be cancelled? How can I contribute?"

Zak Levine, 10

"If we show the terrorists that we have gone on with our lives, but haven't given up on our unity, we shall have won the biggest battle of them all."

Alicia Lutes, 16

"I do feel that I can do something to lead in the future. I don't know the size or the impact of what I can do, but I can do something."

Nkem Lkparanta, 17

some components of safety themselves. Where they can feel that they can improve situations, increase safety and show caring, they are so inclined.

One child who had been bullying others, sobbed the week after the World Trade Center imploded. He understood with lightening speed that his behavior intended to terrorize. He based his cruelty on difference, fear and enjoyed the power. He saw himself in the hatred that crossed the skies and abruptly sought to change.

An issue like school bullying now has a deeper meaning for children. They can make changes in their own schools and neighborhoods safer through their own behaviors and leadership.



Responding to Children in the Wake of Terrorism

Momentous Legislation on Children and Homeland Preparedness

Connecticut is the only state in the nation to have passed broad planning legislation on homeland security and children. This legislation, S.A.02-8, "An Act Concerning Civil Preparedness and the Needs of Children," recognizes the special needs and assets of children in both being protected as well as in helping to lead and protect our democracy.

Passed with the unanimous support of both houses, this act requires a report on the provisions in homeland preparedness and emergency response planning which responds to children. The report must assess and convey to leadership how homeland security planning addresses:

1. The discrete health needs of children for purposes of bio-terrorism preparedness;
2. Public education and communications for families on public safety issues relating to terrorism;
3. Training in safety and security measures and multi-hazard response plans for child care workers, school personnel and personnel in before and after school programs;
4. Coordination of school health and mental health strategies; and
5. Opportunities for youth to engage in community service, civic activities and programs that provide cultural diversity experience.

The Child Safety and Crisis Response Group

A Child Safety and Crisis Response Group comprised of experts in psychology, youth, violence, family policy, diversity and civics was created to respond to this new legislation. They will together discuss and analyze the impact of homeland security on children, assess the strengths and gaps in the response and help with a report on the findings.

Children, the Vital Homeland Asset

September 11 lessons for children have been gathered for one year. With no true precedent for this heinous mark in our nation's history, many concerned with children have worked with expected and unanticipated outcomes. The findings of teachers, psychologists, youth leaders, parents and policy leaders will be culled and incorporated into Connecticut's homeland security response for children.



Art by Chris Kelly

What can adults do for children?

Talk to them. Find out what they are feeling and wondering. Listen and answer questions honestly.

Assure them of love and safety. Protect them. Children need to know that we will protect them at all costs. They need to understand that they are safe at home, in school and in the neighborhood. Concretely, the nation has raised the safety bar with police, fireman, and law enforcement to inhibit further dangers. Teachers are being trained in safety and evacuation measures. Children need to know they are safe, that our state is working to protect all families.

Don't confuse children's needs with adult needs. This is so easy to do given the steep feelings we have regarding this horrific event in our history. We need to address our anxieties and questions, but not with our children in tow.

Assess how many visuals and how much television, if any, is right for your child. The images offer a reality which can be important and a vehicle for dialogue. However these images can also reunite fear and a pouring of sensations that is unnecessary for children.

Emphasize the good that has emerged. Show the positive that took place this year with community caring; commitment to the embracing of differences in religion, race and political views; raising money to tend to those who are in need from September 11; the rapid care for those who were hurt; and the ever increasing number of heroes who shine for our young.

Help children participate in the practice of democracy. Children seek to participate but should participate in caring ways that teach them the practice of democracy and help them feel pride by contributing. There are so many ways that children can give, all based on their age and interests and the interests and needs of their community. Top this for healing and learning to be part of a civic whole.



"I am worried that the way we came together may have been temporary and want to remind people of what is possible out of these tragic events . . . It is particularly important to emphasize that a simple and small action can make such a huge difference. . . The unity we experienced immediately after September 11 has made America the strongest it has ever been. I am afraid that we may lost that unity and don't want to wait for another possible terrorist attack for us to realize what we must maintain."

Louisa Fisher, daughter of a
World Trade Center victim